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New Haven teachers protest cuts

District issues 60 pink slips to help eliminate \$10 million from budget.

By Rob Dennis
Oakland Tribune

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UNION CITY -- New Haven school district teachers, administrators and union representatives gathered early Tuesday morning at the Alvarado Middle School library to protest looming budget cuts that have caused 60 pink slips to be issued to district teachers.

The library, which opened in April 2010 as part of a \$6.85 million construction project, is symbolic of the crisis facing the district and the state. It could close in the fall as part of \$10 million in districtwide cuts if Gov. Jerry Brown's budget plan and state tax extensions aren't approved, and if New Haven's parcel tax measure fails.

Measure B, on a mail-in ballot to be returned by May 3, would raise \$180 per parcel -- a total of about \$3 million a year -- to offset the cuts.

"Without local and state help, we will close this beautiful library that just opened," New Haven Teachers Association President Charmaine Kawaguchi said. "We will likely lay off 60 energetic and wonderful teachers."

"I've been a teacher here in New Haven for 23 years, and everything that I'm proud to say we can offer our children will be gone. The children of California -- our state's future -- are being permanently damaged."

The 6:30 a.m. protest at Alvarado Middle School was part of a California Teachers Association "day of action" Tuesday that included events in Oakland, San Bruno and Woodland.

"I have to say that in my 20 years, I have never seen it this bad," said Eric Heins, a Pittsburg

teacher who serves on the CTA board of directors. "Over 2,800 teachers so far have received layoff notices in the

greater Bay Area, and that number could go up because many districts haven't reported yet."

State law requires school districts to notify employees by March 15 if there's a possibility they'll lose their jobs.

About 35 teachers in Hayward, 20 in San Leandro, 24 in San Lorenzo and 32 in Newark have received layoff notices. None were issued to permanent tenured teachers in Castro Valley. In Fremont, where the union contract forbids laying off non-temporary teachers, district officials are asking for pay cuts in the latest round of negotiations, and they may try to remove the no-layoffs clause.

At New Haven, the budget has shrunk from \$113 million to \$99 million in the past three years.

In addition to layoffs, the latest cuts would raise K-3 class sizes to 30-1, reduce work days, eliminate the adult education program, and eliminate funding for extracurricular and co-curricular programs such as

athletics, band, color guard and forensics. The Alvarado Middle School Jazz Ensemble, which played at Tuesday's event, is among the programs on the chopping block.

"This is happening in a district that's been fiscally responsible -- and that's a little scary," district spokesman Rick La Plante said.

"We've closed schools. We've reduced -- almost eliminated -- transportation. We've cut administrators. We've cut teachers. We've cut classified staff. We've increased class sizes. We've done all the things we've been told we have to do in this economy, and still we're forced to make our children suffer."

Quyen Tran, a kindergarten teacher at Emanuele Elementary School, just received a pink slip for the second straight year. She is six months' pregnant.

"We're expecting our first baby, and I'm faced with the added stress of losing my job and not being able to provide for my baby," she said.

Contact Rob Dennis at 510-353-7010.



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